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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2590  
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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [IZ](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS SYRIAN COUNTERPART

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)  
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone met October 18 with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Mualam in Abu Dhabi on the sidelines of the BMENA Forum for the Future meetings. According to MOFA, during the thirty minute meeting FM Mualam briefed Nakasone on Syria's normalization of ties with Lebanon, its Turkish-brokered talks with Israel, and efforts Damascus is taking to be helpful on Iraq. For his part, FM Nakasone urged Syria to play a constructive role in bringing stability to the region, and to fully support the international tribunal investigating the assassination of the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The request for the meeting was made by the Syrian side one day prior, according to MOFA First Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Akihiro Tsuji. The Japanese had their own list of possible ministerial bilats during FM Nakasone's brief visit to Abu Dhabi, and Syria was in the bottom half. However, as very few foreign ministers attended the Forum for the Future meeting, a slot opened up and the Japanese accepted the meeting. FM Nakasone was accompanied by Director General for Middle Eastern and African Affairs Toshiro Suzuki, First Middle East Division Director Masahiro Mikami, and Press Secretary Kazuo Kodama. FM Mualam was reportedly accompanied by Syria's Ambassador to the UAE, the Director General for Arab Affairs, and the director of the Foreign Minister's office.

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SYRIA: "WE'RE BEING HELPFUL"  
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¶3. (C) FM Mualam briefed Nakasone on recent developments, including the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with Lebanon, reported Tsuji. He also talked about Syria's Turkish-brokered negotiations with Israel, explaining that four sessions had been held. A planned fifth round of talks was postponed by the Israeli side due to their own domestic political turmoil, and Syria is waiting for the Israeli side to notify them of a new date. Mualam asked Nakasone whether

Japan could approach Israel and ask them to get the talks back on track. Tsuji said he didn't think Japan has complied with Mualam's request yet, but noted that Israeli MOFA Director General Aharon Abramowitz is due in Tokyo on November 19 for Political Director-level talks with Deputy Foreign Minister Kenichiro Sasae. He thinks it possible that Sasae may raise Syria's request at that time. Tsuji reported Mualam told Nakasone that in Syria's view, it is a "must" for the U.S. to participate in the Syria-Israeli talks, and claimed that Secretary Rice has said the U.S. will take part.

¶4. (C) With regard to Iraq, Mualam told Nakasone that Syria is making efforts to be cooperative, citing the recent appointment of a Syrian Ambassador to Baghdad and the fact that it is accepting large numbers of refugees, which are taxing its own people, schools, hospitals, and other service agencies. Mualam mentioned to Nakasone two recent terrorist attacks which had taken place inside Syria, and although he did not mention names, said he is sure both were committed by the same group.

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JAPAN: "COOPERATE WITH HARIRI TRIBUNAL"  
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¶5. (C) Nakasone thanked Mualam for the briefing, and urged that Syria continue to play a more constructive role in the pursuit of peace and stability for the region. He also told Mualam, said Tsuji, that Syria must cooperate with the international tribunal investigating the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and that it is important that the facts of his death be fully investigated and the truth made known. Syria should support the work of the tribunal one hundred percent, said Nakasone.

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NEXT VISIT: "AFTER YOU"  
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¶6. (C) Mualam closed the meeting by congratulating Nakasone for Japan's victory over Iran in the contest for a revolving seat on the Security Council. Mualam claimed that Syria has supported Japan for a long time on this, but Tsuji noted the Japanese do not know how the Syrians -- perhaps Iran's closest friend -- voted in the General Assembly's secret ballot. Mualam also invited Nakasone to visit Damascus, and Nakasone reciprocated with an invitation of his own. They bantered back and forth, with Mualam insisting that Nakasone visit Damascus first. Tsuji said the Japanese have already extended an invitation for Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Al-Miqdad to visit Tokyo, but the Syrians insist he will not come until the Japanese visit Damascus. Tsuji told us Japan has no plans at present to dispatch anyone to Syria on an official visit.

SCHIEFFER